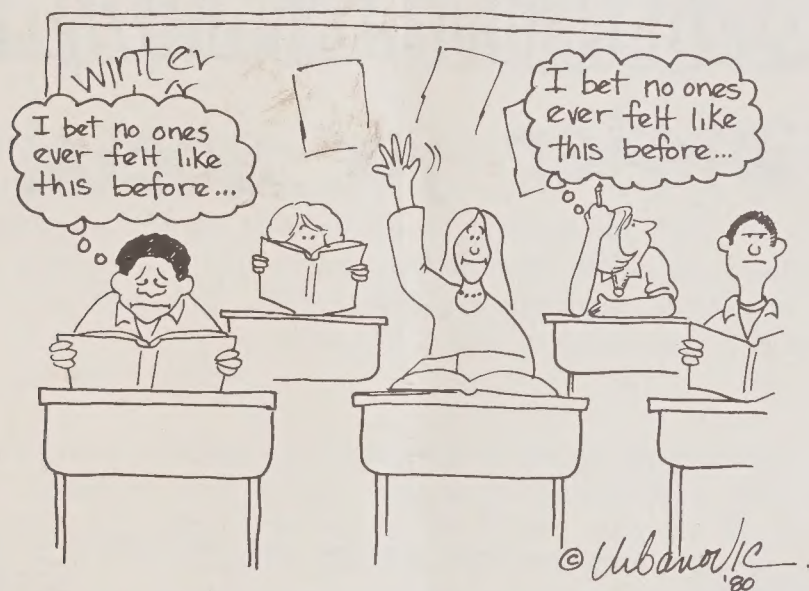


A SAMPLER FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

SPRING
1980



FOCUS ON LESBIAN & GAY ISSUES

spring 1980



a sampler for social change

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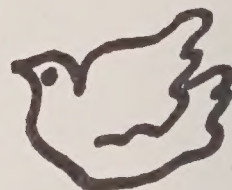
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A COMPLICITY OF SILENCE

Why teach about lesbians and gays in the classroom? This newsletter will answer that question. Like any other minority, gays and lesbians need factual, non-judgemental information about themselves, their heritage and their culture. With the growing liberation movements, this need of ten per cent* of the population can no longer be ignored.

Most high school students learn only prejudices and stereotypes about gays and lesbians through queer jokes outside school, while an ominous silence about the subject reigns inside the classroom. Young people growing up in this atmosphere grow up learning that it's okay to despise and discriminate against gays and lesbians. As with racism and sexism, schools have a responsibility to counter this hatred and prejudice.

The gay or lesbian student is subjected to an image that, in the words of the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education decision, "generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." The two articles in this newsletter, one by a teacher, the other by a former student, give moving examples of just how devastating it feels to be different in school. In a pluralistic society, it is in the tradition of progressive education to study the lifestyles, problems and culture of minorities who differ from the mainstream.

But homophobia, or fear and hatred of homosexuals, affects all of us, and not just lesbians and gays. Studies show that most people fall somewhere on a continuum of bisexual fantasies, feelings and behavior. As H.'s article shows, same-sex relationships are discussed as never before by students; queer jokes occur daily, revealing young people's preoccupation. Removing the taboo on discussing same-sex feelings can help all young people to feel more at ease with their sexuality and sexual identity. We are not free as long as we fear or hate a part of ourselves, or a potential part of ourselves. Easing the tension that now exists around homosexuality and lesbianism can go far in relieving the anxiety surrounding sexuality for all young people, both gay and straight.

Young people growing up today must handle the problems of the future. Lesbian and gay rights is one of the major social issues of this time, and young people need preparation and information to handle this issue responsibly.

EEC's gay and lesbian curriculum project is one major step towards this goal. The response of teachers and various youth agencies to the project's questionnaire has been encouraging and supportive. We need your continuing support. We are asking you for articles on how to integrate lesbian/gay studies into all classes: history, civics, literature, as well as psychology and sex ed curricula; on how to turn queer jokes into constructive discussions; how to handle your own feelings, and the possible reactions of students, parents and colleagues to discussing this subject in the classroom. We're looking for lesson plans on sex roles and changing ideas of masculinity and femininity; myths and stereotypes about gays and lesbians, and on gay and lesbian culture. We are also soliciting personal testimonies by teachers and students.

Help us end a silence that hurts us all.

-Shelley Anderson and
Polly Kellogg

*This is an estimate given by Alfred Kinsey in his 1953 study of American sexuality.

It's hard to write this article. I'm afraid of sounding too sterile, of writing in "educationese." I'm also concerned about putting my foot in my mouth, making some comment - a faux pas - which will point me out as a bigot. Sometimes I have to convince myself of my right to be involved in or concerned with gayness and gay/lesbian curriculum. My own sexuality is too enigmatic. I can only share my experiences and feelings, and hope that they're understood as a part of my learning and that of others.

I am currently teaching in a public school, working primarily with junior high age students. The following journal is a collection of incidents that I encounter almost daily.

A SCHOOL JOURNAL

January 8: Found out that this year's cliché is not "nerd" or "retard". Several kids today turned out these lines: "Aw, you're gay," and "Don't be gay." I responded with "Aw, you're straight," and "Don't be straight." What I got in return was mostly blank faces, with a few curious looks. Does the name-calling mean anything to them? Are they like 3 year-olds who say "shit" because they get a reaction or because they heard someone else say it? Are they like I once was, making the statement with friends, "I got jewed" when I felt I'd been cheated? It's only been since I "discovered" Judaism and discovered that the word I was saying was "Jew" that the statement has really shocked me. Now it has a meaning about people; before it was just a word. What does "gay" mean to them?

January 16: Math class gets curiouiser and curiouiser! B and C came up to turn in their folders. C did his impression of a gay male, complete with lisp, limp wrist, and swish. Along with this came his explanation that his friend B was gay and that this was what it meant to be gay. They and their audience found it a great act. I pointed out that I was not amused. Told them that 1 out of 10 people are gay, and perhaps, since they don't know who is or isn't, they shouldn't take the chance of hurting someone's feelings. They really seemed unsure about whether or not to take me seriously.

January 18: A great week for gay activities. The science class was into slapping stickers on people's backs that read "I'm gay and my mother . . . " After lunch I discovered via bathroom walls that "J is a lessie." During a discussion about the draft, the issue of gayness came up as a way to avoid being drafted. When I mentioned that some proof of gayness would probably be needed, members of the group decided they wouldn't try that route to draft evasion. I added that nearly 75% of all males have at least one homosexual experience in their lives, and that doesn't necessarily mean they're gay. The group (all male 12 and 13 year-olds) suggested we change the topic.

January 29: I was preparing for my first class when I heard the familiar voice of one of my students yelling, "you faggot!" repeatedly. I chose to intervene and latched onto G. He informed me that some kid had grabbed his hat and refused to return it. After getting the hat back, I shared my concern about the name-calling. "If you're angry at someone and call him a faggot, what you're telling me and everyone else is that being gay is bad. And I don't think that's true." G got the message - maybe too well. And maybe he's heard it before because he left me with something to think about. "I know what a faggot is: It's a bundle of sticks." I didn't bother to explain how the word came to apply to gays.* It seemed G had heard enough from me. He'd also done enough research to cover his tracks.

February 2: H and G were screaming at each other again in the halls. I coaxed them into the room and asked to hear both sides of the story. H was furious at G for always being first, right and best. In venting his anger, H called G a faggot, a pervert, and gay. I asked H what being gay had to do with what G had done. The response: "My father has a friend who's gay, and he acts just like that." As the anger between them cooled, I suggested that all gays are not alike, and that possibly there was a different way to handle H's anger at G's behavior.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:* During the middle ages, gay males were rounded up, tied together, and used as kindling to burn women accused of witchcraft.



I worry. I worry that not enough is being done in the school to make an atmosphere where people can be free to be who they are - to be gay, straight, or undefined. I worry each time I ask a kid not to use words like gay, lessie, and faggot negatively, or not to mimic stereotyped gay behavior, that I may be pushing their feelings and ideas about gayness underground or out of my presence. I worry about some child or teacher having to feel less than whole because the people in the school environment are not able to hear and accept his/her gayness.

I feel angry and at a loss for responding to so many incidents. How many more are there each day that other teachers and students must respond to? If the issue were multi-cultural or multi-ethnic education or racism, if kids were yelling "nigger" or doing war-whoops, I can't help but believe that the school's reaction would be swift and firm. But the issue is gayness. The issue involves an invisible minority. It's easy to see who is hurt by racist slurs. It's next to impossible to see who is gay, especially in a society where being gay is not something of which to be proud. The issue is gayness: What is our response and responsibility?

-H.

"Coming out for me was a very hard, lonely, painful process . . ."

When I was in grade school and junior high school, I, too, like all the other kids, was afraid of homosexuality, of queers. I could spot one a mile away - those swishy faggots or those bulldozer bull dykes. I knew all the slang words to describe a lesbian or a gay man. I knew all the queer jokes. There was no way I was ever gonna be one of those people or do those kind of things.

Well, I was wrong. I am one of "those kind of people," and I do those kind of things. I can't spot a queer a mile away and not all feminine men are gay nor masculine women lesbians. I began to learn about lesbianism - women loving women, and through my learning more and understanding more of this lifestyle, I began my coming out at 15.

Coming out for me was a very hard, lonely, painful process. It's hard to go to school every day and not fit in, to have no clique to run with - or if you do, to know you don't really fit in. I had this huge secret I wanted to tell someone, to talk with someone about. It was so lonely and I was so scared someone knew or would find out. One time, I hugged a girl friend in the hallway at school, and some other students saw us. They verbally harassed us for days. Rumors started. One day I was in the rest room and four women cornered me, started pushing me around, and calling me names. I was saved by a teacher walking in.

School activities, such as student parties or dances, were always painful and so lonely. Everyone was so excited about their dates. The thought of going with a woman or even dancing with a woman was not realistic at all. It was so lonely, never fitting in, never being able to really be involved as myself.

In health classes I was taught that feminine hygiene was what young women needed to make ourselves attractive to the young men in our school. In sex education we would learn about heterosexuals relating - never were we taught about homosexuals relating on any kind of healthy terms - there were plenty of queer jokes and remarks, though.

There was no where to go to talk about my lesbianism, to get any questions answered or problems discussed. Because my story is similar to many other teenagers, I believe that schools desperately need to develop some type of support and information for students who are in the process of exploring their own sexuality - to be able to look at it in healthy terms. Students need to get questions answered and to have somewhere to go to just talk. We need to take the myths and stereotypes that are so destructive, abusive and oppressive and just throw them out the window.

-Shayna Berkowitz



GAY AND LESBIAN RESOURCES

*The American Library Association's Task Force on Gay Liberation has published an excellent bibliography on gay materials for schools. Write: Barbra Gittings
Box 2383
Philadelphia, PA 19103
(cost: 25¢)

& & & & & & & & & & & & & & & &

*Transcript of "Homosexuality Goes to School", a radio documentary on gay teachers and students, is available from:
Options in Education
National Public Radio
2025 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
(transcript - free;
cassette: \$6.00)

& & & & & & & & & & & & & & & &

*Lesbian-Feminist Study Clearinghouse
Women's Studies Program
1012 Cathedral of Learning
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

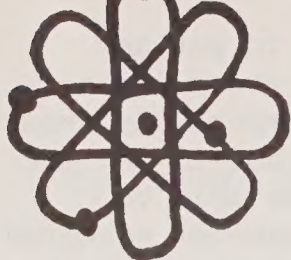
*"Growing Up Gay" is available from: Youth Liberation
2007 Washtenaw Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(cost: 75¢)

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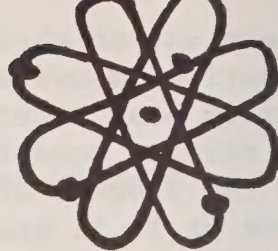
*High School Sexuality (80 pp.)
by the Women's Educational Project. Anti-sexist teaching guide with good section on lesbianism. Available from:
Amazon Reality
P.O. Box 95
Eugene, OR 97401
(\$2.00 - individuals;
\$3.00 - institutions)

& & & & & & & & & & & & & & & &

*Gay Teachers' Support Packet
National Gay Task Force
80 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10011
(cost: \$1.50. New York State residents add 4% sales tax)



NUKES IN THE CLASSROOM



EEC has undertaken a nuclear education project in its quest to provide socially relevant materials for teachers and students. The idea of nuclear energy as a focus for a classroom workbook emerged out of last year's International Anti-Nuclear Days workshop on "Teaching about Nuclear Energy" sponsored by EEC. Many of the participants expressed a need for non-industry materials for elementary and secondary students, wanting to give children the whole story about nuclear power and related issues (see the review of Hucksters in the Classroom in this issue). Knowing that today's students will be forced to deal with pressing energy questions in the years to come, we believe it's imperative that they receive the information necessary to help them in choosing sane and healthy alternatives.

What began as a core group of interested teachers developing lesson plan ideas for fourth through sixth graders has blossomed into a working committee of 25 - educators from all grade levels, energy specialists, artists, scientists and other interested folks, under the direction of two half-time coordinators (Anne and Cathy) in the employ of EEC.

We've designated 16 areas for consideration, including the nuclear fuel cycle, economic implications of nuclear power, environmental/social/health impacts, and alternatives, among others. Along with the basic curriculum features of bibliographies, objectives, and new vocabulary words, we will offer concrete suggestions for classroom and independent study activities to assist children in understanding nuclear issues. Teachers and parents will also be presented with some general readings within the workbook to help them with their own research.

The project is rolling along at a steady pace, but I fear that we were unduly optimistic in our initial predictions of an April delivery date. . . July seems to be a more realistic projection at this point.

We're taking advance orders for the workbook (\$5.00). Write us if you want more information.

-Cathy Hart

IRAN, WAR, PEACE, AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH

During the two weeks after Thanksgiving, two incidents occurred that are the kinds that require making possibly controversial decisions regarding right and wrong. The incidents have to do with student attitudes regarding foreigners, specifically Iranians, and war, peace, killing and death.

The first few days after vacation, we heard several students talking about the situation in Iran and being excited about the possibility of the U.S. invading Iran and killing Iranians. Because students were talking about Iran, Neil held a meeting with about six students and mostly learned from them what they knew of the situation. Generally only one or two students knew more than the fact that hostages were being held by Iranians. Few knew who the Shah was, what an embassy is, or why the Americans were there in the first place. But there was a lot of anger against Iranians expressed and demands for revenge.

Several days later a student wrote an article on Iran for the school newspaper. The article could be understood by a reader as either a satire in the same vein as National Lampoon or Mad, or as an expression of anti-Iranian feelings. I, personally, had difficulty in seeing the humor in the situation. I also felt that no matter what your political feelings about the situation are, that it is important that children begin to learn that when they talk about killing Iranians, that they are talking killing people (disregarding for a moment that children are often only learning in elementary school that death in reality is different than what happens to coyote in Roadrunner cartoons). As appalling as a death of a hostage might be, so is the death of an Iranian. So we invited an Iranian student to school.

About three-fourths of the students gathered the next day to listen to the Iranian student. She opened her discussion by showing photographs of her family and talking a little about her life in Iran. Then she answered questions about the situation. She explained that she wanted the Shah returned because of what he did, but that she did not approve of the taking of hostages. She thought that the taking of hostages might be an attempt by Khomeini to divert the attention of Iranians away from internal problems. Throughout the discussion younger children grew bored

and left, and only a few older students were left near the end. She closed by talking about her father and uncle who were jailed for possessing unapproved reading material, and the torturing and death of friends at the hand of the Shah.

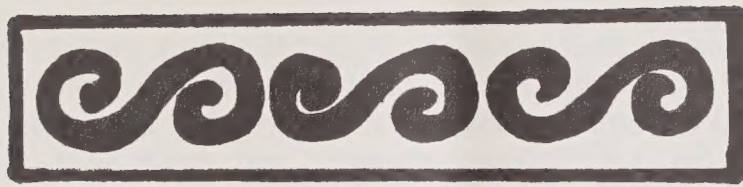
Our point was that whether you agreed with her or not, she deserved to be heard.

The Iranian situation has also precipitated increased interest in war among about five older children. We have responded to them by discussing war and showing pictures to them. Our approach has been to not glorify war, but to show all aspects, including the destruction and death. Two students are doing their own independent research on war. I've tried to let them make their own value decisions on war, but I do admit to them that I am against all wars and that I was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War.

Finally, the other consideration regarding the writing of the article on Iran is whether we should have permitted its publication in the school newspaper. There are two reasons for permitting it. One, it is important that children's opinions be respected in the same way that you would respect an adult's. Two, and possibly more important, we've wanted to encourage children to express their opinions, so that we know what to respond to. The article was the real catalyst to our inviting an Iranian student. It is only by letting students express themselves that we know what to do in response.

- Dave Hursh
The Living-
Learning School
News

12-19-79



VACATION IDEA: 1980 BLACK HILLS ALLIANCE SURVIVAL GATHERING

For ten days in July (18-27), people from many parts of the world will gather in the Black Hills of South Dakota to actively participate in planning and strategizing for survival of life beyond the 80's. The Black Hills have been chosen as the site for this gathering because they are the target for elaborate and deadly energy exploitation. The issues making survival a point of question in this area are the same issues that face all of our communities. The Black Hills are considered an "oasis" of the Great Plains: a natural haven of fresh water, lush vegetation, wildlife and clean air - the recharge area for most of the region's groundwater. The Paha Sapa, as the Hills are known to the Lakota People, are an ancient and sacred place, greatly revered. The life-sustaining capability of this environment is threatened by more than 25 multinational corporations now prospecting for uranium, oil, natural gas, coal and iron ore on one million acres of land.

Among the events which will take place at this gathering is a program called "Education for Survival." This will be divided into two parts: a demonstration model "school" and an In-service Education Project, which will consist of six workshops to develop curriculum and philosophy for teachers and other interested people.

EEC will provide input into both portions of the program. The demonstration model, called the "Black Hills Survival School - 1980" will provide a chance to field test our safe energy curriculum, and the in-service for teachers will include workshops on: educational alternatives; teaching young people about nuclear energy, weapons, and alternative technology; and human dignity in the classroom, among other subjects. We will have a chance to present some of the materials EEC has developed or is developing on these topics.

It promises to be an exciting and stimulating ten days - so all of you teachers, parents and children, and others who have not yet decided where to take your summer vacation - why not plan to see the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota and take part in the Black Hills International Survival Gathering? For more information, contact one of the following organizations:

BLACK HILLS ALLIANCE

P.O. Box 2508

Rapid City, South Dakota 57701

(605) 342-5127

NORTHERN SUN ALLIANCE

1519 E. Franklin Ave.

Minneapolis, MN 55404

(612) 874-1540

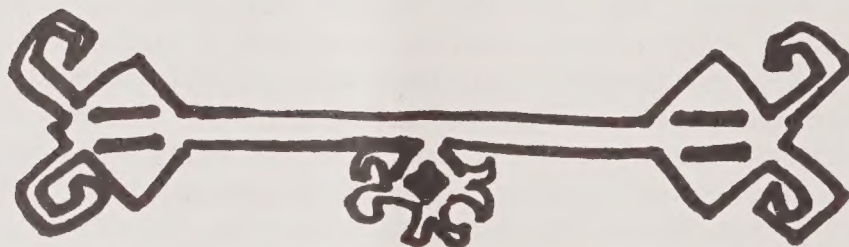
BLACK HILLS ALLIANCE (Mpls. office)

3007 Nicollet Ave. So.

Minneapolis, MN 55408

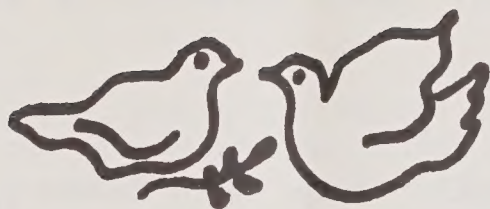
(612) 827-3655

-Anne Doyle



"There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom,' the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. The development of an educational methodology that facilitates this process will inevitably lead to tension and conflict within our society. But it could also contribute to the formation of a new man (sic) and mark the beginning of a new era in Western history. For those who are committed to that task and are searching for concepts and tools for experimentation, Paulo Freire's thought may make a significant contribution in the years ahead."

*-Richard Shaulí, in the
Foreward to Pedagogy of
the Oppressed, by Paulo
Freire*



SURVIVAL SUMMER 1980

Under the coordination of the Mobilization for Survival, a movement is building within communities throughout the country in response to the threats to the physical and economic survival of our people. The stated objectives of SURVIVAL SUMMER include: working toward the prevention of war, a reversal of the arms race, and a redirecting of economic priorities towards socially-beneficial and environmentally-sound goals. Survival Summer is a national effort to build a broad-based coalition for human survival, joining together previously divergent groups in an effort to reach out to minorities, labor groups, and fixed- and low-income people in our common struggle.

Work is underway now in many areas to organize folks around these issues - through community organizing and education, and political activity. Survival Summer needs people - people who will give up a part of their summer vacations, or a couple of weekends, or even a few hours here and there to leaflet, organize workshops, speak with their neighbors, or to do any of the myriad of activities necessary to mobilize large numbers. Summer internships will be available to folks who are able to spend three months in intensive organizing activities.

Current trends within the political and economic scenes threaten our very existence. The issue is SURVIVAL. . . the time to act is NOW! For information about what you can do, contact: Madge Micheels Zietlow, c/o American Friends Service Committee, 1925 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403, (612) 870-1501.

-Cathy Hart

— BOOK OF THE MONTH —

HUCKSTERS IN THE CLASSROOM: A Review of Industry Propaganda in Schools
190 pp. By Sheila Harty. Center for Study of Responsive Law, Washington, D.C. 20036

Hucksters in the Classroom is a study of the use, influence and content of "educational materials" prepared by industry for use in schools. The author of this study, Sheila Harty, reports her conclusions in a clear and easily readable style. One of the facts she cites is that, on the average, schools spend only 1% of their budgets on instructional materials, which are in turn the focus of over 90% of classroom time. Consequently, many teachers who lack the funding for quality teaching aids (and the time for research and preparation of their own materials) grasp eagerly at well-prepared films, slide shows, brochures, and study kits offered by industry, without looking behind the attractive packaging to read the advertising message they contain.

Four specific curriculum areas are singled out as the most blatant in terms of their potential for exploitation: nutrition, energy, the environment, and economics. Numerous examples of product advertising and philosophical bias are provided to demonstrate the extent to which children are being "educated" with a consumerism-oriented outlook. One example of energy "education" follows:

"But there is an answer to the fuel problem - - and that answer lies in the use of nuclear energy in the generation of electricity! Nuclear energy, the miracle product of the splitting of the atom!" (From the comic book, The Atom, Electricity, and You, 1977, distributed by the Commonwealth Edison Company.

Harty has chosen almost 100 illustrations from industry-sponsored teaching materials to vividly demonstrate their effectiveness as advertisements. In addition, the book contains 19 appendices, with such varied topics as: "Teachers' Comments: on the promotional advantage of industry materials," "Highlights of Nuclear Accidents to Date," and "Survey Responses from Thirty Companies."

Lest we think that advertising is an unintentional sideline of the production of educational resources for schools, Harty provides us with quotes such as the following, taken from Vance Packard's The Hidden Persuasion:

"It takes time, yes, but if you expect to be in business for any length of time, think of what it can mean to your firm in profits if you can condition a million or ten million children who will grow up into adults trained to buy your product as soldiers are trained to advance when they hear the trigger words 'forward march'."



What measures does the study recommend to keep in check the abuses it now sees in industry's role in education? The last chapter of the book credits certain corporations and trade associations with developing or funding non-advertising curriculum, explores citizen review initiatives and monitoring organizations, and urges more critical evaluation by educators and parents.

Hucksters in the Classroom is available for \$10 through EEC.

-Anne Doyle and
Cathy Hart

ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC.

JOB OPENING: Teacher of 5-11 year olds wanted for independent day school, beginning in Fall 1980. Contact: Sox Sperry, The Learning Center, 2000 N. Wells St., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46808, (219)422-1361.

* * * * *

SAMPLER FOR SOCIAL CHANGE - BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE THROUGH EEC

- *Learning from Native Americans* (\$1.00)
- *Of Age and Agelessness* (\$1.00)

* * * * *

ATTENTION TWIN CITIES AREA FOLKS:

EEC will sponsor a rummage sale April 25-26 (Friday from noon to 4:00. Saturday from 10:00 to 2:00) at the Walker Church. Please call us at 722-6613 if you'd like to unload any of your treasures on us.

. . . And, on Saturday night, May 31, join us for an evening of Reggae Music with "Pressure Drop" at the Walker Church, 3104 16th Avenue South, Minneapolis.

* * * * *

DR. BENJAMIN SPOCK will address "Peace Concerns of the 1980's" at the 65th anniversary dinner of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Thursday, April 17, at the Earl Brown Center on the University of Minnesota-St. Paul campus. For more information, contact WILPF, Ramar Building, 111 E. Franklin, Minneapolis 55404.

* * * * *

TIME IS PASSING: a media show depicting the common woman's herstory in turn-of-the-century Minnesota, has been produced by the Circle of the Witch Theatre in St. Paul, based on their original stage production. The packet includes an audio cassette tape with dialogue and music from the play, and a carousel of slides portraying women of the time period. Write us at EEC for more details.

eec

WHAT IS EEC? We're a group of people - parents, teachers and students - concerned about both the quality of education and the quality of life. We started in 1970, during all the excitement and energy of the alternative education movement.

WHAT'S OUR PURPOSE? Our aim is to bring to the attention of teachers, students and other concerned people:

- *social change curriculum materials
- *process ideas
- *a viable philosophy of education/political change
- *abundant but inadequately known resources and resource centers
- *examples of successful educational/political work

- CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE -

- Shelley Anderson
- Shayna Berkowitz
- Anne Doyle
- H.
- Cathy Hart
- David Hursh
- Linda Hutchinson
- Polly Kellogg



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EEC IS 10 YEARS OLD!!

